

CHAPTER XVII

THE END OF THE MIDDLE AGES

THE fourteenth and fifteenth centuries formed a transition period, the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Period. In these centuries everything that was characteristically mediæval was disappearing.

To the revolution in thought and art which then began, the name Renaissance, or "new birth," has been given. The story of the Renaissance belongs more properly to Modern History, and only the beginnings of the movement can be traced in this volume.

THE
RENAIS-
SANCE

The Renaissance arose to a great extent from the renewed study of the Latin and Greek classics. Dante, the great Italian poet (1264-1321), admired and revered the Latin poets, especially Virgil. But it was with Petrarch (1304-1374), "the first modern man," that the real study of Latin literature began. He wrote beautiful sonnets in Italian, but it is not for these that he is chiefly famous. His great work was the impetus which he gave to the study of the Latin classics. The revived study of Latin literature led to a desire among scholars to study Greek, and soon after Petrarch's death a certain Chrysoloras, from Constantinople, began to teach Greek at the University of Florence. Even before the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Greek teachers had begun to come to Italy, bringing with them Greek